MARVEL
ELEKTRA
the HAND
第一話
初めの一歩

The Hand –
few names have ever instilled such terror in the very soul of the Marvel Universe.

Elektra witnesses a mystic ceremony that leads her to the never-before-revealed origin of the Hand, the world's most deadly assassins. In feudal Japan, a single murder fuels one young samurai's struggle for dominance – a struggle that will lead to the inception of this immortal ninja clan. And when a foreign merchant sends his beautiful daughter to learn the ways of the warrior, a cycle is set in motion that will change the Marvel Universe...forever!

Collecting *Elektra: The Hand #1-5*, written by Akira Yoshida (*Thor: Son of Asgard*) and illustrated by Christian Gossett (*The Red Star*).

第五話

最初の兆し

MARVEL

MARVEL PSR+

ELEKTRA

the HAND

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the HAND

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#1
第一話
初めの一歩
GURU
EFX

Hawkeye, Chapter One
"No Apologies"
"First Step"

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THE POWER TO BRING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE...

YES, ELEKTRA... RESURRECTION.

I COULD HAVE TOLD YOU BUT I THOUGHT IT BEST FOR YOU TO SEE IT WITH YOUR OWN EYES.

BUT HOW...?

IT IS ONE OF THE ANCIENT MYSTIC SECRETS THE HAND KEEPS.

ONE THAT IS CLOSELY GUARDED.

ONE THAT WILL REMAIN GUARDED FROM ME?

AS I AM A FOREIGNER...

...AND A WOMAN.

QUITE THE CONTRARY, ACTUALLY.

CENTURIES AGO, THIS RESURRECTION RITUAL WAS CREATED IN ORDER TO BRING A FOREIGNER BACK FROM THE DEAD.

A FOREIGN WOMAN.

YES, ELEKTRA, YOU ARE NEITHER THE FIRST FOREIGNER NOR THE FIRST FEMALE TO JOIN OUR RANKS.

IN ALL YOUR TIME WITH THE HAND, LEARNING OUR SKILLS, OUR METHODS AND OUR TECHNIQUES HAS BEEN YOUR SOLE MOTIVATION. YOUR OBSESSION, I WOULD SAY.

YOU HAVE STUDIED OUR WAYS, BUT KNOW NOTHING OF OUR HISTORY.

IN ORDER TO TAKE YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE HAND'S FUTURE, YOU WILL FIRST NEED TO ESTABLISH YOUR CONNECTION TO ITS PAST.

"A PAST THAT BEGINS WITH KAGENOBU YOSHIOKA..."

KYUSHU, JAPAN. 1575

IF YOU'RE EVER GOING TO GROW UP, YOSHIOKA, YOU HAVE TO STOP TELLING THESE STORIES.

WE'VE HEARD THE SAME LIES FROM YOU SINCE THE TIME YOU COULD SPEAK. NO ONE BELIEVES THEM ANYMORE.

YOU ARE *NOT* THE SON OF A SAMURAI!

YES, I AM!

MY FATHER *WAS* A SAMURAI IN THE SERVICE OF LORD NOBUNAGA ODA AND--

AND HE LOST HIS LIFE IN THE BATTLE FOR KYOTO JUST AFTER YOU WERE BORN.

SO YOUR MOTHER, WITH NO OTHER RELATIVES, RETURNED HOME IN SHAME.

LIAR!!

MY MOTHER WOULD NEVER CONSORT WITH GAIJIN SCUM!

DON'T SPEAK ABOUT MY MOTHER THAT WAY! THERE'S NO SHAME IN WHAT SHE DID!

WHAT ABOUT THE SHAME IN WHAT SHE *DOES?* SELLING HER BODY TO FILTHY FOREIGNERS JUST TO SUPPORT YOU?

SPOK!

I'LL KILL YOU!

LET ME GO!

YOU'RE NOT THE SON OF A SAMURAI, JUST THE SON OF A WHORE.

RUN BACK TO YOUR MOTHER, YOSHIOKA. MAYBE ***SHE'LL*** LISTEN TO YOUR STORIES.

AS LONG AS SHE'S NOT WITH A CUSTOMER...

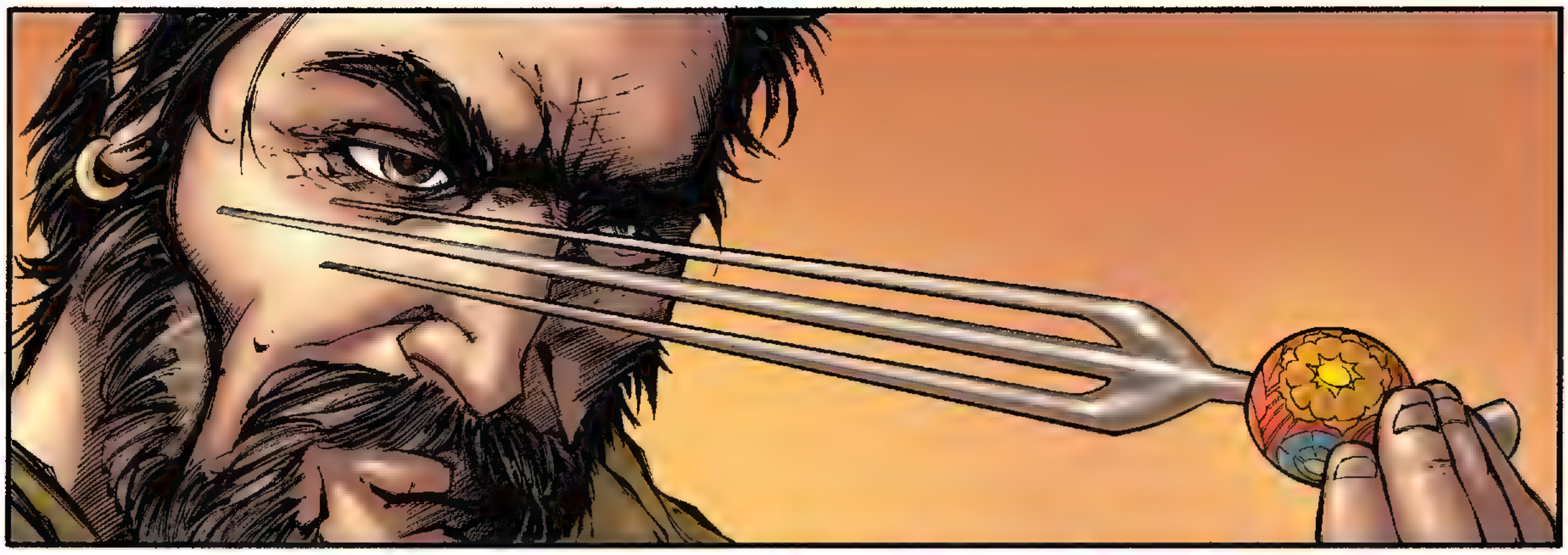
MOTHER, I'M HOME.

NO, KAGE, LEAVE!

RUN!

DIDN'T GET MY MONEY'S WORTH FROM YOU, WOMAN.

DO WHAT I SAY THIS TIME OR I'LL KILL THE BOY.



MOTHER, I DIDN'T...

HUSH NOW, MY LITTLE WARRIOR. THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR OR REGRET HERE.

YOU ACTED AS ANY SAMURAI WOULD. YOU ARE INDEED YOUR FATHER'S SON.

THE WALLS OF THIS HOVEL ARE AS THIN AS RICE PAPER. SOMEONE MAY HAVE HEARD. WE MUST ACT QUICKLY.

I WILL ACCEPT THE BLAME FOR THIS MURDER. THE AUTHORITIES NEED NOT KNOW YOU HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE CRIME.

THE MAN REQUESTED THINGS THAT I HAD NO OBLIGATION TO DO AND FORCED HIMSELF ON ME. I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO STAB HIM.

MOTHER, NO! YOU CAN'T--

QUIET, KAGENOBU! LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER!

I WAS ONCE THE WIFE OF A RESPECTED SAMURAI! I LEARNED MANY A LESSON FROM YOUR FATHER.

BUSHIDO, THE CODE BY WHICH A SAMURAI LIVES, DICTATES THAT A TRUE WARRIOR MUST LIVE AND DIE WITH HONOR.

WHILE HONOR SHOULD NEVER BE TAKEN LIGHTLY, THERE IS NO HONOR IN THROWING ONE'S LIFE AWAY NEEDLESSLY.

YOU HAVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF YOU, KAGENOBU, WHILE I SIMPLY WALK IN THE SHADOWS OF MY PAST.

THE MURDER OF A FOREIGNER IS A SERIOUS CRIME THAT I MAY HAVE TO PAY FOR WITH MY LIFE. BUT I GLADLY GIVE IT SO THAT YOURS WILL BE SPARED, MY SON.

MOTHER...

THIS IS THE CONSTABLE. A NEIGHBOR REPORTED NOISES.

MAY WE ENTER?

IT IS TIME. TIME FOR ME TO PLAY THE VICTIM.

TIME FOR YOU TO BE STRONG, KAGENOBU.

ONE FINAL DETAIL...

STAY WHERE YOU ARE. PUT THE KNIFE DOWN!

ARREST HIM! THIS FOREIGN SCUM ATTACKED ME!

AIIIEE!

WHAK

SUBDUE HER!

WHAT DID I DO?! I WAS DEFENDING MYSELF!

SILENCE, WOMAN!

SHAK!

I WAS PROTECTING WHAT'S MINE!

SHUT YOUR MOUTH, WHORE!

MOTHER! NO!

MOTHER!

BE STRONG, KAGENOBU.

THE NEXT DAY...

ARE YOU POSITIVE THIS IS SOMETHING YOU WISH TO PURSUE, ISHIYAMA-SENSEI?

YES, INSPECTOR IMAGAWA. I SEE NO OTHER CHOICE.

THE BOY'S MOTHER MURDERED A PORTUGUESE MERCHANT. WITH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS LOOKING TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH THESE FOREIGN TRADERS, SHE WILL SURELY BE EXECUTED?

YES, THAT IS THE COURSE THESE EVENTS WILL MOST LIKELY FOLLOW.

THEN THE BOY BECOMES AN ORPHAN. AN ORPHAN IN NEED OF A HOME...

...A HOME I AM WILLING TO PROVIDE HIM AT MY SCHOOL.

FOR THE MOMENT, YOU SAY THE BOY SEEMS TO BE IN SHOCK AFTER WITNESSING THE SLAYING. SOON, THAT SHOCK WILL NO DOUBT TURN TO ANGER.

WITHOUT THE PROPER GUIDANCE, HIS ANGER COULD BE MISDIRECTED...MISDIRECTED AT THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY HE HOLDS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS MOTHER'S FATE.

NOW I AM CERTAIN THAT IS A PROBLEM YOU WISH TO AVOID, INSPECTOR.

A PROBLEM I AM MORE THAN WILLING TO *HELP* YOU AVOID.

YES, YES, I CAN SEE THE LOGIC IN WHAT YOU PROPOSE, ISHIYAMA-SENSEI.

GUARD, BRING THE YOSHIOKA BOY AT ONCE!

HELLO, KAGENOBU. I AM SABURO ISHIYAMA.

THE POLICE ARE RELEASING YOU INTO MY CUSTODY AND CARE.

YOU SHALL BECOME MY STUDENT. I AM YOUR SENSEI NOW.

A CRIME WE BOTH KNOW *SHE* DID NOT COMMIT...

HOW DID YOU...?!

THE INFLUX OF FOREIGNERS INTO OUR LANDS TROUBLES ME. I WANT TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE NOT A THREAT TO OUR PEOPLE, SO I HAVE MY SPIES KEEP TABS ON SOME OF THE MORE *PROBLEM* INDIVIDUALS.

ONE OF MY MEN SAW WHAT YOU DID TO PROTECT YOUR MOTHER FROM THAT MERCHANT. HE SAW *YOU* KILL THE FOREIGNER.

DO NOT WORRY. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A FRESH START AT MY SCHOOL, WHERE YOU WILL BE TRAINED IN THE WAYS OF BUSHIDO. YOU WILL BE TAUGHT MARTIAL ARTS AND SWORDSMANSHIP. YOU WILL LEARN SELF-DISCIPLINE, CHIVALRY AND HONOR.

YOU WILL BECOME A SAMURAI.

I CAN ONLY BRING YOU AS FAR AS THIS GATE, KAGENOBU. YOU MUST ENTER THE ISHIYAMA SCHOOL OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL. THE CHOICE IS YOURS.

SSSHHH

IT IS TIME TO LEAVE YOUR PAST BEHIND YOU, KAGENOBU. YOU WILL MOST LIKELY NEVER SEE YOUR MOTHER AGAIN.

THE AUTHORITIES BELIEVE SHE KILLED THAT MERCHANT, SO SHE WILL BE EXECUTED FOR HER CRIME.

"BY FOLLOWING THIS PATH, YOU WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF YOUR SAMURAI FATHER.

"YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF YOUR MOTHER AND ENSURE HER SACRIFICE WAS NOT MADE IN VAIN.

"YOU WILL LEARN TO TEMPER YOUR ANGER, STRENGTHEN YOUR BODY AND SHARPEN YOUR MIND TO BECOME A WARRIOR WHO KNOWS NO EQUAL."

TODAY, A BOY SHALL BECOME A MAN.

AS IS DICTATED BY TRADITION, OUR TWO TOP STUDENTS, KAGENOBU YOSHIOKA AND DAISUKE SASAKI, SHALL FIGHT TO DETERMINE WHO WILL GRADUATE FROM STUDENT TO SAMURAI.

YOUR FUTURE RESTS SOLELY IN YOUR OWN HANDS.

TEN YEARS LATER...

BE STRONG. BE STRONG.

BEGIN!

WELL DONE, KAGENOBU. YOU HONOR THE MEMORY OF YOUR ANCESTORS WITH YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.

YOUR TRAINING IS COMPLETE. THERE IS NOTHING LEFT FOR YOU TO LEARN HERE...

DUM DUM

DUM DUM

"...THE WORLD OUTSIDE THIS SCHOOL AWAITS YOU.

"GO FORTH AND LEAVE YOUR MARK UPON IT!"

TO BE CONTINUED...

#2
第二話
最初の一撃

Honshu, Japan.
Autumn, 1587.

HHIIYAAHH!

SLAAASH

CURSE YOU, YOU WAYWARD FOOL. A MASTERLESS SAMURAI LIKE YOURSELF DOES NOT DESERVE TO LIVE.

THOUGH I DO NOT BOW DOWN IN THE SERVICE OF A LORD LIKE MOST SAMURAI, I AM NOT MASTERLESS.

I SERVE THIS COUNTRY. MY ALLEGIANCE IS TO THE SPIRIT OF JAPAN.

AS I WALK THESE LANDS, I SEE THE CORRUPTION, THE INJUSTICE AND THE LIES THAT HAVE BEEN FORCED ON MY PEOPLE BY THOSE IN POSITIONS OF POWER.

I TRAVEL IN SEARCH OF THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE THAT WILL HELP ME PUT JAPAN BACK IN THE HANDS OF OUR PEOPLE.

JUST AS YOUR LIFE NOW LEAVES YOUR BODY, SO TOO WILL CONTROL OF THESE LANDS SLIP THROUGH THE FINGERS OF THE CORRUPT MASTERS YOU SERVED.

IT'S HIM. THE LONE SWORDSMAN WHO WEARS THE HAND MARK ON HIS BACK.

THEY SAY HE REFUSES THE SERVICE OF ANY LORD OR PATRON, CHOOSING TO WALK HIS OWN PATH.

MANY SEEK HIM OUT TO TEST HIS STRENGTH, BUT HE HAS YET TO BE EVEN NICKED BY AN OPPONENT'S BLADE.

ANOTHER MAN HAS COME LOOKING FOR YOU, SIR.

I HAVE SEARCHED FAR AND WIDE FOR YOU, YOSHIOKA-SAN.

THIS IS QUITE A SURPRISE.

YOU'RE A LONG WAY FROM THE ISHIYAMA SCHOOL, KIKUCHI-SAN.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MY OLD FRIEND.

BUT GIVEN THE DISTANCE YOU'VE TRAVELED, I MUST ASSUME YOU'RE HERE ON A MATTER OF SOME IMPORTANCE?

ISHIYAMA-SENSEI...

ISHIYAMA-SENSEI IS DEAD.

HOW?

FROM PNEUMONIA. AN UNLIKELY ENDING FOR SUCH A STRONG MAN.

AND THE SCHOOL?

SASAKI-SAN HAS BEEN PLACED IN CHARGE...

FOR NOW.

FOR NOW?

BEFORE HIS STRENGTH LEFT HIM ON HIS FINAL NIGHT, ISHIYAMA-SENSEI MADE TWO REQUESTS.

THE FIRST WAS THAT WE SEEK YOU OUT AND ASK YOU TO RETURN.

AND THE SECOND?

THAT YOU ASSUME LEADERSHIP OF THE ISHIYAMA SWORD SCHOOL.

WELL, IT'S A LONG WALK BACK TO KYUSHU, SO WE HAD BETTER GET STARTED.

PLENTY OF TIME FOR YOU TO TELL ME WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON AT HOME OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS.

Kyushu, Japan.
Two months later.
Summer, 1588.

SSSHHH

SENSEI, I HONOR YOUR MEMORY...

TEARS ARE A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.

SASAKI-SAN.

ISHIYAMA-SENSEI WOULD HAVE REPRIMANDED YOU FOR THAT SHOW OF EMOTION.

ISHIYAMA-SENSEI WON'T BE REPRIMANDING ANYONE ANYMORE.

NO, I GUESS THAT'S YOUR JOB NOW THAT YOU'VE RETURNED...

...YOSHIOKA-*SENSEI*.

IT CAME AS A SURPRISE TO ME AS WELL, SASAKI-SAN...BUT WE MUST RESPECT ISHIYAMA-SENSEI'S WISHES.

I HAVE NO DESIRE TO STEP ON ANYONE'S TOES...

...SO LET US NOT GET OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT.

COME, ISHIYAMA-SENSEI'S QUARTERS WILL BE A MUCH BETTER PLACE FOR US TO DISCUSS MATTERS.

I KNOW THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY LOVE LOST BETWEEN US, SASAKI.

AND I REALIZE YOU FEEL I HAVE NO RIGHT ACCEPTING LEADERSHIP OF THIS SCHOOL AFTER A THREE-YEAR ABSENCE.

BUT ANY PETTY RIVALRIES SHOULD BE PUT BEHIND US.

WE HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL, WHICH WE WILL RUN...

...TOGETHER.

BUT WHAT OF ISHIYAMA-SENSEI'S WISH?

FROM WHAT I GATHER, HIS WISH WAS THAT I ASSUME LEADERSHIP OF THE SCHOOL...

...BUT THERE WAS NO STIPULATION THAT SUCH LEADERSHIP REST ***SOLELY*** ON MY SHOULDERS.

I HAVE SEEN AND LEARNED MUCH IN MY TRAVELS. MY EYES HAVE BEEN OPENED TO SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES I NEVER DREAMED POSSIBLE. THINGS ISHIYAMA-SENSEI COULD NEVER HAVE TAUGHT US...

THINGS **I** CAN NOW TEACH **YOU**. TEACH **OUR** STUDENTS.

WHILE I HAVE BEEN ROAMING THESE LANDS IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE, YOU HAVE BEEN HERE IMPARTING IT TO ISHIYAMA'S YOUNG WARRIORS.

YOU HAVE EARNED THEIR RESPECT AND THEIR TRUST...AND THAT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE FREELY GIVEN TO SOMEONE WHO LEFT THE SCHOOL BEHIND.

WHILE MY ROLE WILL BE TO TEACH, YOURS WILL BE TO LEAD.

UNDER OUR GUIDANCE, THE ISHIYAMA SWORD SCHOOL WILL NOT ONLY SURVIVE THE LOSS OF OUR FOUNDER...

...WE WILL THRIVE!

I'M SORRY, YOSHIOKA, BUT EXPANSION IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE.

WHAT?!

NOT LONG AFTER YOU LEFT, THE RULING DAIMYOS IMPOSED REGULATIONS ON ALL MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOLS. WE MUST LIMIT THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WE ACCEPT AND TRAIN.

THEY DID THIS BECAUSE THEY FEAR US!

THEY KNOW THE POWER THE SCHOOLS HOLD AND SO SEEK TO TAKE THAT POWER AWAY. THEY LOOK TO LIMIT OUR RANKS IN HOPES OF NEUTERING US.

SLAM

IT'S THE SAME ALL ACROSS JAPAN! I'VE SEEN IT FIRST-HAND EVERYWHERE I'VE TRAVELED.

THESE CORRUPT DAIMYOS WHO CLAIM TO GOVERN US--WHO CLAIM TO BE LOOKING OUT FOR OUR BEST INTERESTS--THEY CARE FOR NO ONE BUT THEMSELVES.

AND NOW THAT THOSE FILTHY FOREIGNERS ARE LINING THEIR POCKETS WITH TEA AND SPICE, THE DAIMYOS ARE TURNING THEIR BACKS ON THEIR OWN PEOPLE.

THE ENTIRE IDENTITY OF JAPAN IS IN DANGER OF BEING ERASED BY THOSE WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO BE LEADING US!

BUT WE HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THEM!

AND HERE IS WHERE THAT POWER LIES...

THE HAND HAS FIVE FINGERS, EACH OF WHICH CAN EXIST INDEPENDENTLY OF THE OTHERS.

NOT UNLIKE THE FIVE ISLANDS THAT FORM JAPAN!

HOWEVER, WHEN THE FIVE FINGERS OF THE HAND COME TOGETHER FOR A SINGLE, UNIFIED PURPOSE...

...THE HAND BECOMES AN OBJECT OF UNWAVERING POWER!

YOU'RE SUGGESTING REBELLION?

NOT REBELLION... RECLAMATION! WE SIMPLY TAKE BACK WHAT IS OURS!

WE SEND MESSENGERS TO FIND LIKE-MINDED SCHOOLS WHO SHARE OUR VIEWS AND WILL JOIN OUR CAUSE. WE FORM A SECRET SOCIETY THAT EXTENDS ACROSS ALL FIVE JAPANESE ISLANDS.

AND WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, WE STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST OUR GOVERNMENT AND PUT THE POWER BACK IN THE HANDS OF THE JAPANESE PEOPLE.

BUT IN ORDER TO FAN THE FLAMES, WE MUST FIRST LIGHT THE FIRE.

GATHER THE STUDENTS, SASAKI. THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE!

KRASH

Three Months Later.
Autumn, 1588.

I'VE NOT STEPPED FOOT IN THIS TOWN SINCE THE DAY ISHIYAMA-SENSEI TOOK ME AWAY.

HOW IRONIC THAT HIS LEGACY IS THE REASON I HAVE RETURNED TODAY.

NO NEED FOR AN EXTENDED VISIT, EITHER.

LET US SIMPLY PICK THE APPROPRIATE TARGET AND BE ON OUR WAY.

I'D WIPE THIS ENTIRE VILLAGE FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH IF I COULD.

ONE OF THOSE SHOULD BE SUITABLE, NO? SMALL ENOUGH TO SAFELY STAGE OUR FIRST ATTACK, BUT BIG ENOUGH TO HAVE THE NECESSARY IMPACT.

GROWING UP IN A FISHING VILLAGE, YOU LEARN THAT BIGGER IS ALWAYS BETTER.

THAT'S OUR TARGET.

WHHSSHH

WHHSSHH

÷URK÷

÷ACK÷

THOK

UGGH

SLASH

THE RAID WAS A SUCCESS! YOU ALL PERFORMED THE TASKS SET BEFORE YOU PERFECTLY.

NEWS OF THE SLAUGHTER WILL QUICKLY SPREAD. OTHERS WILL SOON RALLY TO OUR CAUSE.

THE EVENTS OF THIS EVENING WILL NOT SOON BE FORGOTTEN.

TONIGHT WAS BUT THE FIRST BLOW AGAINST OUR CORRUPT GOVERNMENT.

TONIGHT, WE SENT A WARNING TO THE FOREIGN HEATHENS INVADING OUR SHORES.

TONIGHT, THE HAND HAS BEEN UNLEASHED ON THE WORLD!

To Be Continued...

#3
第三話
第一印象
GURU
EFX

Kyushu, Japan. Summer, 1590.
The Ishiyama Sword School.

MY FELLOW REBELS, ALLOW ME TO BEGIN BY THANKING YOU FOR COMING ALL THIS DISTANCE TO OUR HUMBLE MOUNTAIN RETREAT.

I FELT IT WAS TIME THAT YOU WERE ALL BROUGHT TOGETHER TO MEET FACE-TO-FACE. FOR THE SELECT FEW GATHERED HERE THIS EVENING MAKE UP...

THE INNER CIRCLE OF *THE HAND!*

YOU HAVE ALL NOBLY PLEDGED YOUR KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND RESOURCES TO OUR CRUSADE...

...A CRUSADE THAT WILL SEE OUR CORRUPT GOVERNMENT TOPPLED, THE FOREIGNERS DRIVEN FROM OUR SHORES, AND THE POWER OF JAPAN PLACED BACK INTO THE HANDS OF OUR OWN PEOPLE.

Chapter Three

Daiichi Insho

"The First Impressions"

JUST AS A HAND HAS FIVE FINGERS, EACH OF YOUR ORGANIZATIONS OPERATES FROM ONE OF JAPAN'S FIVE ISLANDS.

AND FROM EACH OF THESE POINTS, AS WORD OF OUR ACTIONS SPREADS...

...JUST AS THE LINES THAT RUN ACROSS A HAND CONNECT EACH FINGER...

...WE WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AND WIN NEW FOLLOWERS ALL ACROSS JAPAN.

Later...

正義

WHAT TROUBLES YOU, MY FRIEND? YOU SHOULD BE CELEBRATING OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

ALL OUR PLANS ARE COMING TOGETHER AND YOU CANNOT EVEN SMILE?

AT WHAT COST, YOSHIOKA? YOU'VE CHOSEN TO ALLY US WITH HEATHENS AND HERETICS!

YOU BEST WATCH YOUR TONGUE, SASAKI! BE MINDFUL OF THE COMPANY YOU KEEP BEFORE YOU INSULT THEM.

WE STARTED THE HAND TO BRING AN IDENTITY BACK TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND.

EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE LEADERS IN THIS ROOM SHARES THAT GOAL.

THE IDEA OF IDENTITY MAY DIFFER SLIGHTLY BETWEEN EACH REGION, BUT WE ALL STAND UNITED IN RECLAIMING THAT WHICH WE HAVE LOST.

WHILE THE APPEARANCES AND METHODS OF THOSE GATHERED HERE ARE VARIED, IT IS OUR SHARED IDEOLOGY THAT BRINGS US TOGETHER.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR DEBATE. WE CAN CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION WHEN OUR GUESTS HAVE GONE IN THE MORNING.

DRINK WITH ME NOW.

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME, YOSHIOKA-SAN. I'M FEELING QUITE ILL AT THE MOMENT.

The Next Afternoon...

KNOCK KNOCK

ENTER.

PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCERE APOLOGY FOR MY DISRESPECTFUL ACTION.

THAT WILL BE QUITE ENOUGH. RISE.

PLEASE JOIN ME. I THINK I AM OWED AN EXPLANATION.

I TAKE IT YOU WILL JOIN ME IN A DRINK *TODAY?*

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME LAST NIGHT. I DID NOT EXPECT OUR ALLIES TO LOOK SO...ASSORTED.

YOU TRAVELED JAPAN LOOKING FOR LIKE-MINDED GROUPS TO JOIN OUR CAUSE WHILE I REMAINED HERE AT THE SCHOOL IN OUR ISOLATED ENVIRONMENT.

I WAS SIMPLY CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY THE DIVERSITY OF THE COLLECTIVE WE FOUND OURSELVES HOST TO.

ONE SHOULD NEVER FEAR WHAT ONE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND.

I REALIZE THAT NOW. NEVER AGAIN WILL YOU HAVE TO QUESTION MY LOYALTY TO THE CAUSE. I WILL EMBRACE ALL THOSE WHOSE BLOOD FLOWS AS MINE, JUST AS I WILL REJECT THE FOREIGN FILTH THAT INFECTS IT.

YOSHIOKA-SENSEI! SASAKI-SENSEI!

COME QUICKLY!

A FOREIGNER APPROACHES THE GATE!

A FOREIGNER? LET US SEE IF WE CANNOT ERADICATE THAT VIRUS OF WHICH YOU SPEAK.

GOOD AFTERNOON.

WWSSHHH

WE DO NOT WELCOME FOREIGN FILTH ON OUR PROPERTY!

WHAT FOOLISH REASON COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE FOR RISKING YOUR LIFE BY COMING HERE?

PL...PLEASE... SPARE ME.

I COME TO...TO YOU ON BEHALF OF MY DAUG--

RELEASE HIM.

NOW.

HAHAHAHA

THUMP

FATHER!

IF THIS GIRL REALLY IS YOUR DAUGHTER, YOU HAVE HER TO THANK FOR YOUR LIFE TODAY!

LEAVE HERE AND NEVER SET FOOT ON THIS MOUNTAIN AGAIN.

BUT THE VILLAGERS TOLD US YOU COULD HELP. THAT YOU WOULD UNDERSTAN--

THE VILLAGERS KNOW OF MY HATRED FOR FOREIGNERS. BY SENDING YOU TO ME, THEY WERE SENDING YOU TO YOUR DEATH.

BEGONE BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND.

The Next Morning...

YOSHIOKA-SENSEI!

THE GIRL FROM YESTERDAY... SHE HAS RETURNED!

AT THE GATE AGAIN?

YES, BUT ALONE THIS TIME.

THE FOREIGN MAN IS NOT WITH HER?

NO.

CURIOUS...

SWISH

ARE YOU STUPID, GIRL? WAS MY WARNING NOT CLEAR?

I WISH TO BECOME A STUDENT AT YOUR SCHOOL AND WILL NOT LEAVE UNTIL I AM ADMITTED.

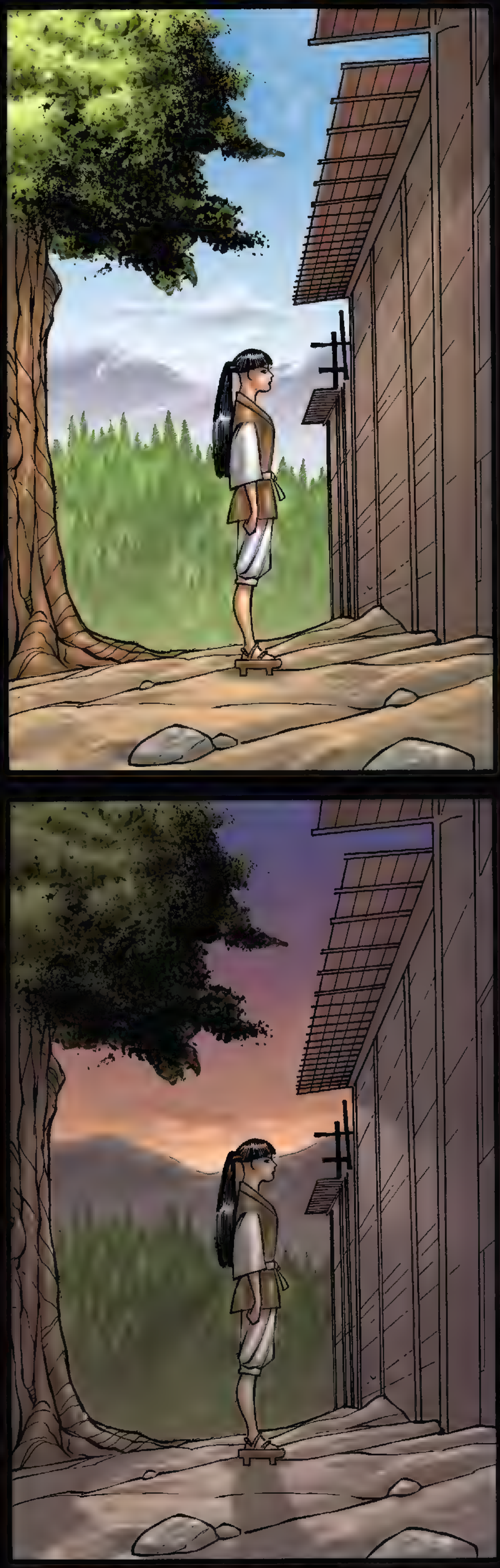
IS THAT SO?

WHILE I AM SURE WE COULD FIND USES FOR YOU INSIDE THESE WALLS...

...I'M AFRAID YOUR EDUCATION IS NOT ONE OF THEM.

GO HOME TO DADDY.

SLAM



The Next Morning...

AT FIRST I WAS AMUSED. NOW I AM IMPRESSED.

I RARELY SEE SUCH UNWAVERING DETERMINATION... NOT EVEN IN MY STUDENTS.

HATRED.

I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES. IT'S THE SOURCE OF YOUR FIERCE CONVICTION.

TO BE SO YOUNG AND SO ANGRY... YOU REMIND ME OF MYSELF AS A BOY.

I'LL GIVE YOU ONE CHANCE.

RETURN TOMORROW WITH YOUR FATHER.

I WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORY.

ALTHOUGH SHE MAY NOT LOOK IT, ELIZA IS INDEED MY DAUGHTER. I FIRST CAME TO JAPAN AS A YOUNG MAN, BEFORE THIS CURRENT INFLUX OF MERCHANTS.

I FELL IN LOVE WITH ELIZA'S MOTHER AND WE WERE MARRIED. SOON AFTER, ELIZA WAS BORN.

I LEFT THEM TO MAKE THEIR HOME HERE IN JAPAN, RATHER THAN TAKE THEM ON MY TRAVELS. A FATAL LAPSE IN JUDGMENT ON MY PART.

AS MARRIAGES TO FOREIGNERS, MUCH LESS HALF-BREED OFFSPRING, WERE SOMETHING UNHEARD OF, MY WIFE SUFFERED ENDLESS TORMENT AND RIDICULE.

ONE EVENING, UPON HEARING OF HER SITUATION, THREE RONIN SAMURAI DEEMED MY WIFE A TRAITOR TO THE JAPANESE RACE AND MURDERED HER RIGHT BEFORE ELIZA'S EYES.

NOT WISHING TO KILL A CHILD, EVEN ONE OF FOREIGN BLOOD, THE SAMURAI SPARED ELIZA, WHO I HAVE RAISED ALONE SINCE.

MY BUSINESS TAKES US FROM PORT TO PORT, BUT NO MATTER WHERE WE GO...

WHILE SHE LOOKS JAPANESE, ELIZA HAS NEVER BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE JAPANESE PEOPLE. OR BY THE FOREIGNERS LIVING HERE FOR THAT MATTER.

I SEE.

SO THE LOCAL VILLAGERS WITH THEIR LONG MEMORIES TOLD YOU MY STORY, ABOUT THE ORPHAN BOY WHO LOST HIS MOTHER AND NOW RUNS THIS SCHOOL ON THE MOUNTAIN.

THEY FELT I WOULD TAKE PITY ON YOU AND ACCEPT YOUR DAUGHTER, THIS YOUNG WOMAN WITHOUT A PLACE IN THE WORLD, INTO MY HOME, YES?

YES. WE FELT THAT--

I WANT YOU TO TEACH ME TO KILL.

EXCUSE ME?

I WANT TO KILL EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER HURT ME.

I WANT YOU TO TEACH ME THE SKILLS BY WHICH TO INFLICT PAIN AND END LIVES.

SO MUCH LIKE MYSELF...

PLEASE EXCUSE HER, GENTLEMEN, I AM SURE SHE DID NOT MEAN TO IMPLY THAT--

I HAVE HEARD ENOUGH.

WE WILL ALLOW YOUR DAUGHTER TO ENTER OUR SCHOOL ON PROBATIONARY TERMS.

WHAT?!

YOU AND I WILL DISCUSS ELIZA'S PLACE HERE LATER, SASAKI.

FOR NOW, LET US CALL FOR SOME SAKE SO WE CAN SHARE A DRINK WITH MARTINEZ-SAN HERE AND GO OVER ELIZA'S ENROLLMENT.

ASKING HIM FOR FORGIVENESS...

...FOR WELCOMING A FOREIGNER INTO HIS SCHOOL AND BRINGING HER TAINT TO EVERYTHING WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED?!

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD ALLOW THIS?!

RAISING YOUR CUP TO THE VERY SCUM WHOSE STAIN WE ARE TRYING TO CLEANSE FROM OUR COUNTRY!

MARTINEZ IS NOW IN OUR DEBT! WE CAN USE HIM TO ASCERTAIN INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY. HE BECOMES OUR UNWITTING INFORMANT.

DO NOT PRESUME TO JUDGE ME OR MY ACTIONS UNTIL YOU KNOW MY MOTIVATIONS, SASAKI.

OBVIOUSLY, THE IRONY HERE IS LOST ON YOU.

A FOREIGNER, JUST LIKE THE MEN WHO TOOK MY MOTHER FROM ME, NOW ASKS THAT I ACCEPT ONE OF THEIR OWN INTO OUR "FAMILY".

HA! THE FATES COULD NOT BE KINDER.

AND THE GIRL?

FOR NOW, WE TRAIN HER. MAKE HER FEEL COMFORTABLE AND ACCEPTED AMONG US.

THEN, WHEN HER FATHER IS NO LONGER OF ANY USE TO US...

...I WILL PERSONALLY ENJOY KILLING THEM BOTH!

"ELIZA, YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO TEMPER YOUR ANGER, STRENGTHEN YOUR BODY AND SHARPEN YOUR MIND TO BECOME A WARRIOR WHO KNOWS NO EQUAL.

"YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF YOUR MOTHER AND ENSURE THAT THE PAIN AND HUMILIATION SHE SUFFERED WAS NOT IN VAIN.

"YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO FOLLOW A PATH OF VENGEANCE, WHERE YOU WILL SEEK TO RIGHT THE INJUSTICES OF THE PAST WITH VIOLENCE AS YOUR GUIDE."

"YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO COMMIT YOURSELF TO OUR SERVICE. AND YOU HAVE EMBRACED OUR WAYS MORE FAITHFULLY THAN I EVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED.

"I AM SURPRISED BY HOW YOU HAVE IMPRESSED ME, ELIZA. I AM NOT EASILY TAKEN OFF GUARD."

CARE TO TRY AGAIN?

OF COURSE.

KLAK KLAK

YOUR PROGRESS OVER THESE PAST TWO YEARS HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF REMARKABLE, ELIZA.

YOU'VE LEARNED OUR TECHNIQUES MORE QUICKLY THAN EVEN I DID.

THEY SAY THE STUDENT IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE MASTER.

KLAK

KLAK

WELL, YOUR MASTER IS PRETTY DAMN GOOD.

WHISH

WUMP

ANOTHER ROUND?

MAYBE THAT IS ENOUGH FOR TODAY.

YES, OF COURSE. THE OTHER STUDENTS NEED MY ATTENTION.

Later...

CAN WE TRUST THEIR DEFENSES WILL BE WEAKEST AT THAT TIME?

MARTINEZ HAS NEVER BEEN WRONG. WE FILL HIM WITH SAKE AND HE DRUNKENLY TELLS US ALL THEIR SECRETS. I TOLD YOU HE WOULD BE OF USE TO US.

I BELIEVE IT IS TIME WE FINALLY MADE USE OF HIS DAUGHTER AS WELL.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SASAKI?

SHE IS READY TO BECOME ONE OF US.

NO, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! SHE HAS NOT COMPLETED HER TRAINING!

SHE HAS NOT BEEN INDUCTED INTO OUR ORDER YET!

PLAYING FAVORITES, ARE WE?

NO, IT'S JUST...

TRIAL BY FIRE... JUST LIKE THE OTHERS. WE CANNOT MAKE EXCEPTIONS.

YOU'RE RIGHT. SHE MUST PROVE HER WORTH TO US... TONIGHT.

KNOCK KNOCK

ENTER.

I SEE YOU CAME PREPARED TO DEPART.

YOU ALMOST SOUND DISAPPOINTED.

SIMPLY CONCERNED.

CONCERNED I MIGHT FAIL?

CONCERNED BECAUSE I HAVE NEVER QUESTIONED SENDING A STUDENT ON A MISSION BEFORE.

I MUST GO NOW.

BE STRONG, ELIZA...

To Be Continued...

第四話
最初の過ち
2004
GURU

KYUSHU, JAPAN.
AUTUMN, 1592.

CHOK

CHOK

CRASH

SHLOK

SEÑOR FERNANDEZ...?

ELIZA?

THE ISHIYAMA SWORD SCHOOL DOJO.

YOU CAN STEP OUT OF THE SHADOWS. I HEARD YOU ENTER.

FERNANDEZ WAS A FRIEND OF MY FATHER'S.

WHY DID YOU HAVE ME KILL HIM?

SO YOU COMPLETED YOUR MISSION? THE SPANIARD IS DEAD?

WHY DID YOU HAVE ME KILL HIM?

BECAUSE HE WAS A FOREIGNER.

I'VE TAKEN MY FIRST LIFE...THE LIFE OF A MAN I KNEW. HIS BLOOD NOW STAINS MY HANDS.

WERE THERE NO NOBLE CAUSES OR HIDDEN SECRETS BEHIND HIS ASSASSINATION?

YOU HAD ME MURDER HIM SIMPLY BECAUSE HE WAS NOT JAPANESE?

YES.

HE WAS NOT THE FIRST AND HE WILL NOT BE THE LAST.

THE HAND WILL NOT REST UNTIL THE FOREIGN STAIN HAS BEEN WIPED FROM JAPAN.

THE HAND?

YES, THE HAND...A SECRET UNDERGROUND SOCIETY OF WARRIORS WHO SHARE THE COMMON GOAL OF MAKING THIS COUNTRY *OURS* AGAIN.

AN ORGANIZATION THAT I HOPED THIS ANGRY YOUNG GIRL WHO CAME TO MY SCHOOL YEARS AGO WOULD ONE DAY BECOME A PART OF.

HAVE THE FIRES OF FURY THAT ONCE BURNED IN YOUR HEART GONE OUT?

HARDLY. THEY LIE LOW, SIMPLY WAITING TO BE REKINDLED.

SO YOU'D KILL MY FATHER AS WELL, JUST AS YOU WOULD ANY OTHER FOREIGNER?

NO, YOUR FATHER IS PROTECTED. HE IS OF VALUE TO US.

WE USE HIM FOR INFORMATION. HE HAS BEEN OUR UNWITTING SPY FOR ALL THESE YEARS.

SMAK

WHY? WHY HAVE YOU KEPT THIS FROM ME? AND WHY REVEAL YOUR TRUE SELF TO ME NOW?

BECAUSE I FELT IT WAS TIME YOU FINALLY LEARNED THE TRUTH...HOWEVER PAINFUL IT MIGHT BE.

WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO THIS SCHOOL, I ALMOST KILLED YOU AND YOUR FATHER ON THE SPOT.... BUT YOU IMPRESSED ME.

I SAW SO MUCH OF MYSELF IN YOU. I FELT YOUR ANGER AND I SHARED YOUR PAIN.

I KNEW I HAD FOUND A KINDRED SPIRIT, SO I AGREED TO TRAIN YOU.

HOWEVER, I DID HAVE ULTERIOR MOTIVES THAT WERE LESS THAN NOBLE. I KNEW YOUR FATHER WOULD BE IN MY DEBT IF I ACCEPTED YOU AS A STUDENT.

AND I REALIZED HE WAS THE KEY THAT COULD UNLOCK THE DOOR TO THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY. A KEY WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO USE TIME AND TIME AGAIN TO LEARN ALL WE CAN ABOUT YOUR PEOPLE.

YOUR PEOPLE... THE PEOPLE WHO REFUSED TO ACCEPT YOU GROWING UP. THE PEOPLE WHO RIDICULED YOU. THE PEOPLE WHO HURT YOU.

THE VERY SAME PEOPLE YOU ASKED ME TO TEACH YOU TO KILL!

FORGIVE ME.

FORGIVE ME FOR BEING WEAK. AND THANK YOU FOR BRINGING ME BACK TO MY SENSES.

YOU ARE INDEED CORRECT. WHILE MY MOTHER WAS KILLED BY SAMURAI, IT WAS THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY, MY FATHER'S OWN PEOPLE, WHO TURNED THEIR BACKS ON ME. THAT IS WHERE MY HATRED LIES.

AND JUST AS THEY HAVE FORSAKEN ME, SO TOO SHALL I FORSAKE THEM. LET THEM ALL BEWARE AS THEY WILL KNOW NO MERCY FROM THIS DAY FORTH.

THE HATRED AND BLOODLUST ARE STILL VERY MUCH A PART OF ME.

A PART I AM ANXIOUS TO SHARE...

...WITH YOU.

KYUSHU, JAPAN.
SPRING, 1594.

THWOK

THWOK

THWOK

WHISH

SHLIP

YOU CLUMSY FOOL, LEAVING YOURSELF WIDE OPEN AFTER YOUR INITIAL ATTACK.

AMATEUR ASSASSINS LIKE YOURSELF SHOULD STICK TO EASIER BOUNTY.

BY KILLING YOU...I HOPED TO WIPE OUT THE FOREIGN DISEASE...THAT HAS BEEN INFECTING THE HAND.

WHAT?!

YOU ARE OF THE HAND? AND YOU WOULD ATTACK ONE OF YOUR OWN KIND?

YOUR SECRET IS OUT... ELIZA MARTINEZ. WE KNOW YOU ARE...NOT "OUR KIND".

WE KNOW HOW YOU HAVE CORRUPTED...YOSHIOKA-SENSEI WITH YOUR... WESTERN WILES, MAKING HIM WEAK AND SOFT...

YOU CAN NO LONGER HIDE. YOUR TIME HAS COME.

AND SO HAS YOURS.

THE ISHIYAMA SWORD SCHOOL.
ONE WEEK LATER.

WE ARE BETRAYED. I WAS RETURNING FROM NAGASAKI WHEN A HAND ASSASSIN ATTEMPTED TO TAKE MY LIFE.

IT IS AS I FEARED.

YOU KNEW OF THIS?!

I SUSPECTED SOMETHING WAS AMISS. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SECTS HAS BROKEN OFF OF LATE. RUMORS OF DISSENSION HAVE REACHED MY EARS.

I'VE ALSO RECEIVED REPORTS OF HAND AGENTS SELLING THEIR SKILLS FOR PROFIT, LIKE COMMON MERCENARIES. COMMITTING CRIMES AGAINST OUR OWN PEOPLE FOR A HANDFUL OF COINS.

THE LARGER THE HAND HAS GOTTEN, THE MORE DIFFICULT IT HAS BECOME TO CONTROL.

THE ASSASSIN KNEW OF MY HERITAGE, THAT I AM NOT FULLY JAPANESE.

HE SAID THE HAND SEEKS TO END MY LIFE AND MY INFLUENCE OVER YOU.

YOUR BACKGROUND WAS A WELL-GUARDED SECRET THAT FEW PEOPLE KNEW OF.

CLEARLY SOMEONE WE TRUSTED HAS TURNED AGAINST US.

GO NOW TO YOUR FATHER. I DO NOT KNOW HOW DEEP THIS BETRAYAL RUNS, BUT I FEAR HE MAY NO LONGER BE SAFE.

BUT WHAT WILL YOU...?

IT IS TIME FOR ME TO BURY AN OLD GRUDGE... ONCE AND FOR ALL.

SASAKI!

WITH THE HAND SECT LEADERS ON THEIR WAY HERE TO DISCUSS OUR FUTURE *WITHOUT YOU*, I SENT OUR STUDENTS AWAY.

IT'S A PITY I HAD TO DENY THEM THE PLEASURE OF WATCHING...AS I KILL THE MAN WHO BETRAYED THE HAND.

I BELIEVE THE BURDEN OF TREASON LIES FIRMLY ON YOUR SHOULDERS, SASAKI.

YOU WERE NEVER ABLE TO FORGET AND FORGIVE, WERE YOU? YOU'VE BEEN PLOTTING AGAINST ME SINCE THE DAY I RETURNED TO THIS SCHOOL, JEALOUS I WAS PLACED IN CHARGE.

YOU WENT ALONG WITH MY PLANS FOR THE HAND WITH EVERY INTENTION OF SEIZING POWER FOR YOURSELF SOMEDAY. I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE SIGNS. I NEVER SHOULD HAVE TRUSTED YOU.

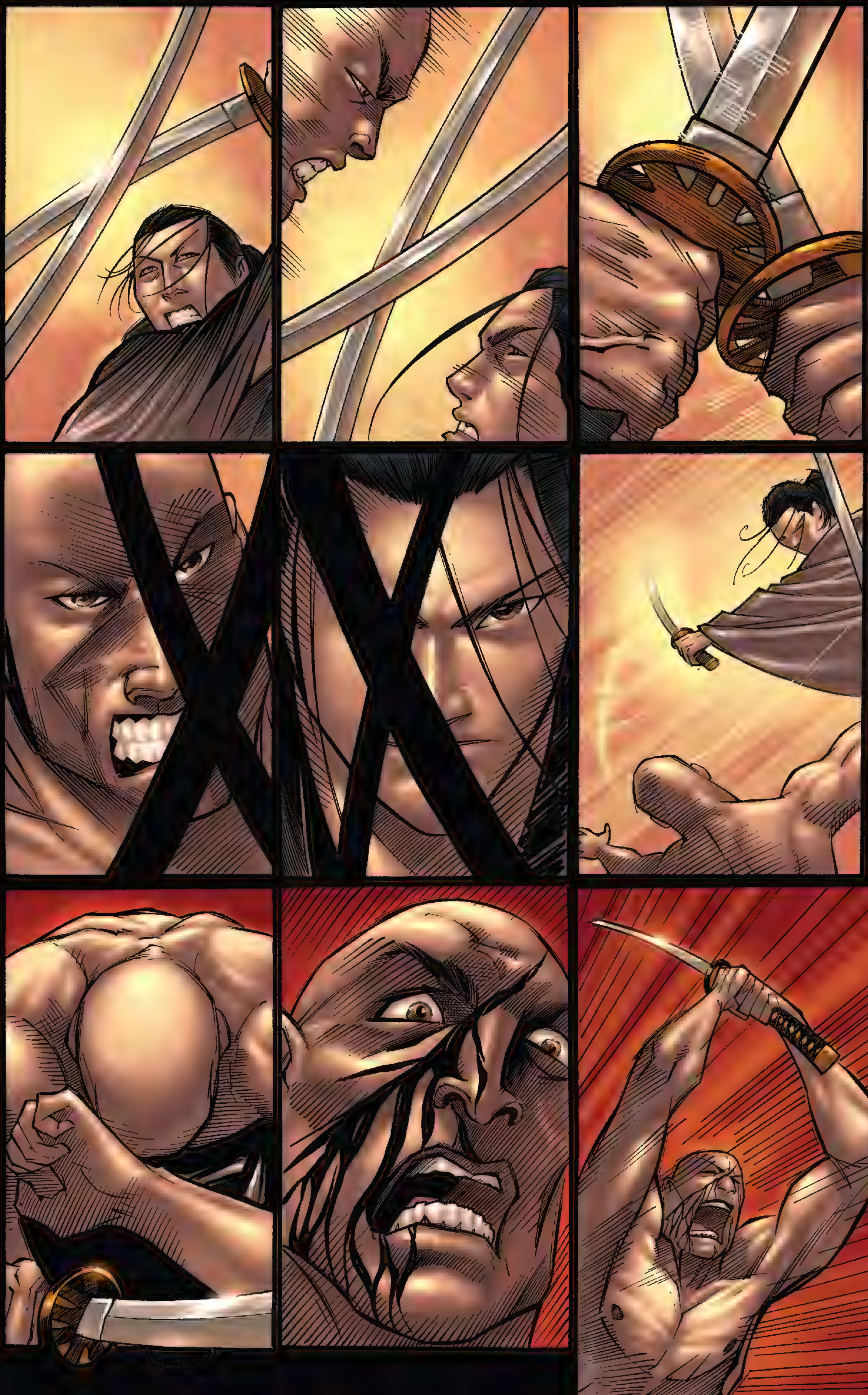
YOU LIE! IT WAS *YOU* WHO TURNED YOUR BACK ON THE HAND THE DAY YOU LAID EYES ON ELIZA. FIRST YOU ACCEPTED THAT FOREIGN FILTH INTO THIS SCHOOL...

...THEN YOU ACCEPTED HER INTO YOUR BED. YOU BEGAN SLEEPING WITH THE VERY ENEMY WE SOUGHT TO ERADICATE FROM OUR LIVES.

WITH YOUR LOYALTIES NOW IN QUESTION, YOU GAVE ME NO CHOICE. I HAD TO BRING YOUR TRAITOROUS ACTIONS TO THE ATTENTION OF THE HAND'S INNER CIRCLE.

FOR THE ULTIMATE BETRAYAL OF OUR ORDER, YOU MUST NOW PAY THE ULTIMATE PRICE.

DIE!



THE ACTIONS OF A FOREIGNER ONCE ROBBED ME OF EVERY-THING I HELD DEAR IN LIFE.
YOUR BETRAYAL THIS DAY PROVES THAT YOU ARE NO BETTER THAN HE WAS.
SO IT IS ONLY FAIR THAT YOU SUFFER THE SAME FATE THAT HE DID.

ELSEWHERE...

FATHER?

IS THAT YOU, FATHER?

FATHER!

NOOO!

MY FATHER IS DEAD.

THE HAND WILL NOT REST UNTIL *WE* ARE DEAD AS WELL.

EVEN NOW THEY STAND POISED IN THE SHADOWS, WAITING TO STRIKE.

WHEN I WAS JUST A BOY, MY MOTHER TOLD ME THAT THERE IS NO HONOR IN THROWING ONE'S LIFE AWAY NEEDLESSLY.

BUT THERE IS LESS HONOR IN TURNING YOUR BACK AND RUNNING FROM TROUBLE YOU HELPED CREATE.

YES. WE HAVE NOTHING LEFT...

...BUT EACH OTHER.

AND REVENGE.

TO BE CONCLUDED...

第#5話
最初の兆し

KAGENOBU YOSHIOKA! WHILE YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY GUIDED THE HAND SINCE ITS INCEPTION...

...THE FACT THAT YOU WELCOMED ONE OF THE ENEMY INTO OUR FOLD CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT YOU HAVE TURNED YOUR BACK ON THE CAUSE.

HYPOCRITE! IT IS YOU AND THE OTHER SECT LEADERS WHO HAVE STRAYED FROM THE CAUSE.

DON'T THINK WORD OF YOUR MERCENARY ACTIVITIES HAS ESCAPED MY ATTENTION. BY SELLING OUR SERVICES LIKE COMMON THUGS IT IS *YOU* WHO BETRAY OUR IDENTITY...YOU WHO TURN ON YOUR OWN PEOPLE!

WE MAY HAVE BRANCHED OUT IN ORDER TO HELP FILL OUR COFFERS AND FURTHER OUR GOALS, BUT WE ASSOCIATE ONLY WITH *OUR* PEOPLE.

OUR CLIENTS HAVE JAPANESE BLOOD IN THEIR VEINS, UNLIKE THIS TRAMP YOU HAVE TAKEN UNDER YOUR WING!

YOU EMBRACED ELIZA AND HER ABILITIES WHEN YOU KNEW NOTHING OF HER MIXED HERITAGE. SHE SHARES OUR GOALS AND HER ACTIONS IN OUR NAME HAVE PROVEN THAT--

ENOUGH! I WILL NOT HAVE EXCUSES MADE FOR ME. IF THEY CONSIDER ME THEIR ENEMY, SO BE IT!

THEY CAN DIE BY *MY HAND* TONIGHT!

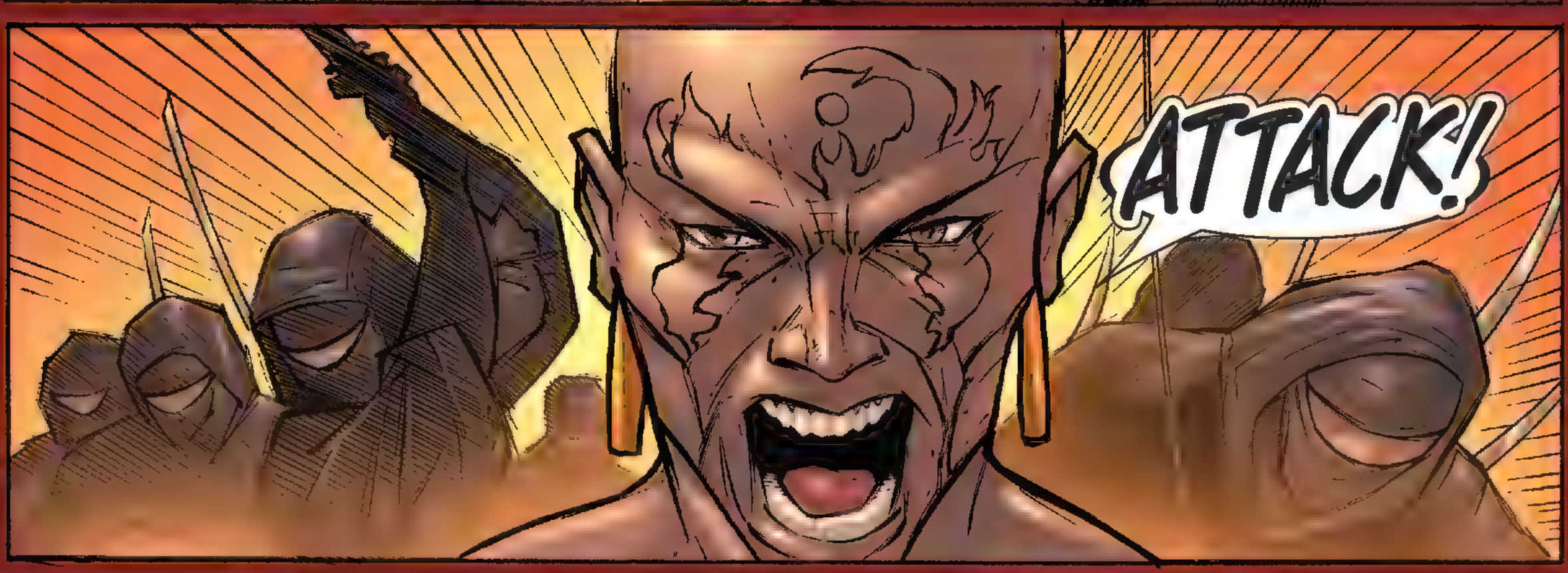
HAHAHAHA!

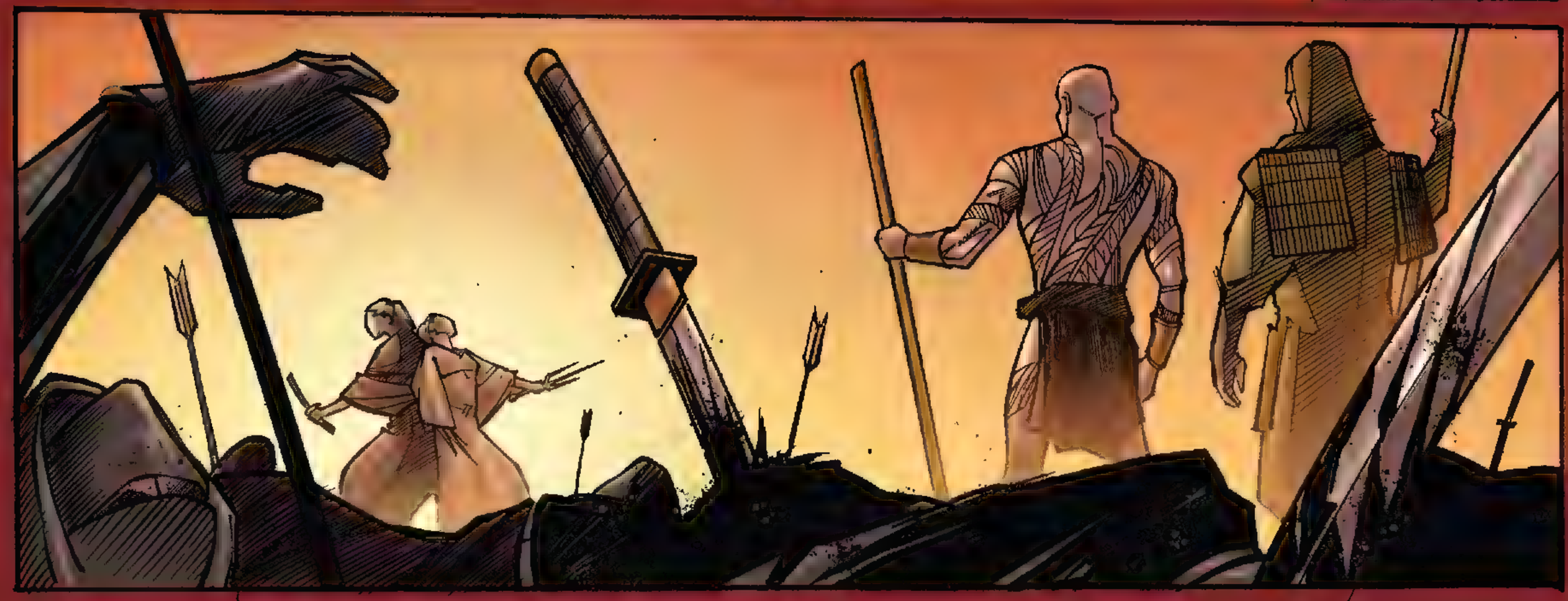
YOSHIOKA'S MUTT HAS FINALLY FOUND HER TONGUE. HOW AMUSING!

COME THEN, GIRL, SHOW US JUST HOW DEEP--

SHLOK

THE BEGINNING OF THE END...


ATTACK!



AIIEEE!

VWWWSSHH

ELIZA!

YEARGGHH!

SWISH

SLICE

THUMP

NO!!!

WSSSSH

CHINK

SLURP

KLING

KLANG

SWAASH

THWOK

UUNNF!

SHOK

SHOK

SHOK

ELIZA, I HAVE ONLY EVER LOVED TWO WOMEN... AND MY ACTIONS DOOMED THEM BOTH.

MY MOTHER'S DEATH SET INTO MOTION THE EVENTS THAT HAVE LED ME TO THIS VERY MOMENT.

MY PATH OF VIOLENCE BEGAN WITH THE SACRIFICE OF THE FIRST WOMAN I LOVED...IT SEEMS ONLY FITTING THAT IT SHOULD END AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER.

LET ME DIE BY YOUR HAND, MY LOVE...

BE STRONG, KAGENOBU.

WE SHALL MEET AGAIN...

THE HAND HAS HELD ME IN ITS GRASP FOR FAR TOO LONG.

YOU'VE MANAGED TO STEAL EVERYTHING I HOLD DEAR...MY INNOCENCE, MY FATHER, MY LOVER...

BUT MY LIFE IS NOT YOURS FOR THE TAKING. IT IS STILL MY OWN!

AND I CHOOSE TO END IT...

...BY MY OWN HAND!

A NOBLE ACT, BUT FUTILE, NONETHELESS. SHE HAS DONE OUR JOB FOR US.

FOR EVEN IN DEATH, SHE BELONGS TO THE HAND.

DO YOU THINK IT WISE...ATTEMPTING TO BRING HER BACK?

YOU SAW HOW SHE FOUGHT! SHE WAS DEATH INCARNATE!

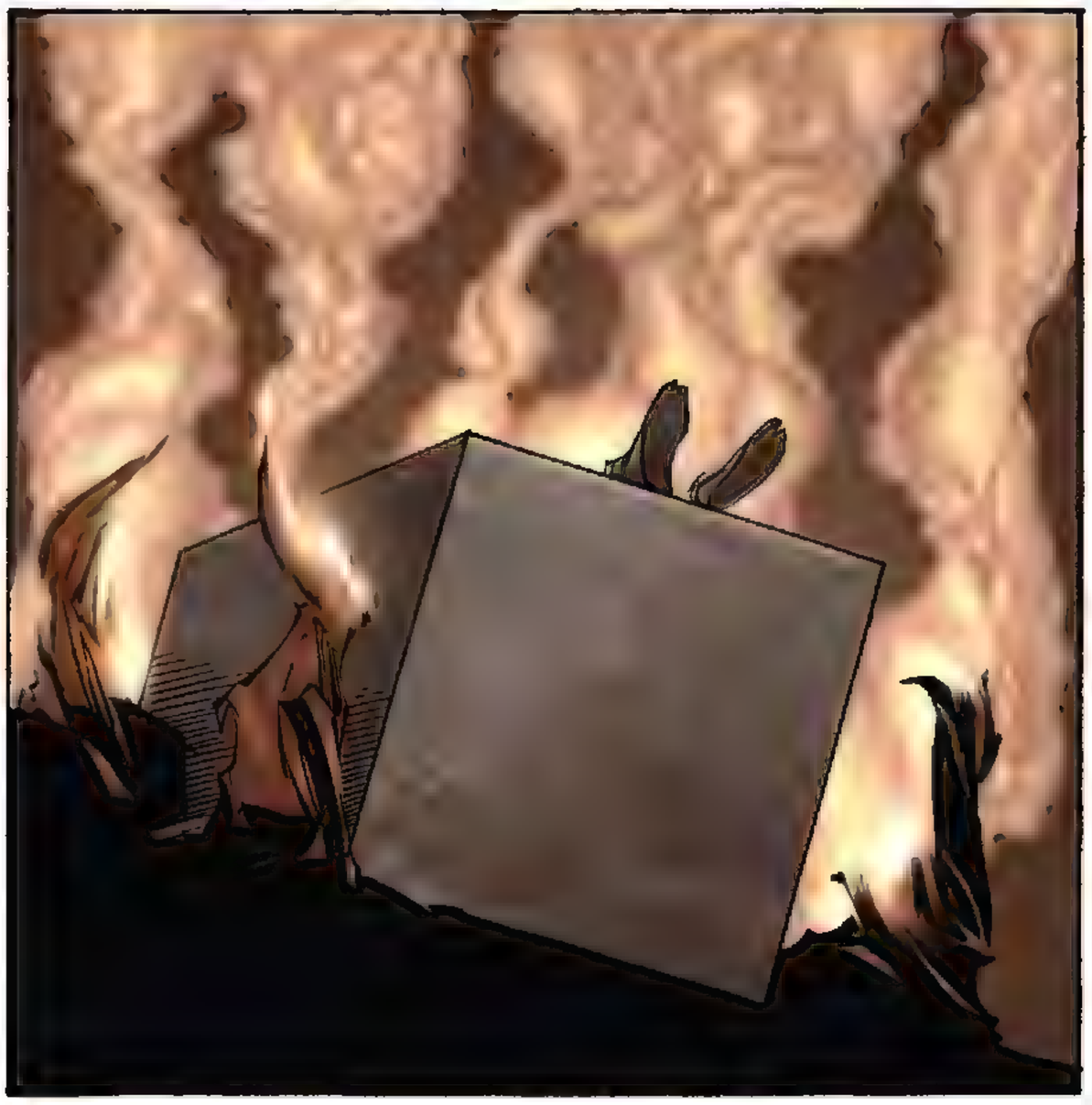
JAPANESE OR NOT, UNDER THE HAND'S CONTROL, SHE WILL BECOME A LIVING WEAPON TO USE AS WE SEE FIT.

"*IF* THE PROCESS IS A SUCCESS. WE HAVE HAD MIXED RESULTS SO FAR...AND IT HAS NEVER BEFORE BEEN PERFORMED ON A WOMAN."

"THERE IS NOTHING TO BE LOST SHOULD WE FAIL...BUT IMMEASURABLE POWER TO BE GAINED IF WE SUCCEED.

"BRING HER BODY TO THE DAIS DOWN BELOW. LET US VENTURE TO BREATHE LIFE BACK INTO HER BODY."

LATER...



WERE WE SUCCESSFUL?

YES, ELIZA LIVES AGAIN.

THE DISORIENTATION OF DEATH LINGERS, BUT WHEN SHE FULLY AWAKENS, HER HATRED FOR US WILL BE REKINDLED.

WE MUST BREAK HER OF THIS AND TEACH HER HER PLACE...AS A LOYAL SERVANT OF THE HAND!

EXCELLENT! THEN SHALL WE ATTEMPT THE PROCESS AGAIN WITH THE OTHER?

YES, HAVE THEM PREPARE SASAKI'S BODY.

"AND SO THE CYCLE OF RESURRECTION BEGAN..."

SO, THIS IS TO BE MY FATE? AND I AM NOT THE FIRST.

NOR THE SECOND. NOR THE THIRD...

NOR THE LAST.

THE HAND HAS CHOSEN TO USE ITS POWER TO RESURRECT ME...TO CONTROL *ME*.

BY BRINGING BACK THE DEAD, THE HAND, IN ESSENCE, ALTERS THE PAST.

HOWEVER, FOR ALL OUR MYSTIC KNOWLEDGE, WE CANNOT PEER INTO THE FUTURE.

THE HAND CANNOT CONTROL FATE.

JUST AS ELIZA MARTINEZ'S ACTIONS DICTATED THE PATH THAT SHE WAS TO WALK FOR THE HAND...

YOUR DESTINY, ELEKTRA NATCHIOS, REMAINS IN *YOUR* HANDS.

THE END.